WARREN MAHY

I went to school with Ben Wootten, right from primary school, intermediate, and all the rest of it. Then he went away to university, and I didn't see him for ten years, but one day he contacted me and said there was a project that was happening that I should be involved with. Other than doing stuff at school with Ben, I never trained, didn't go to art school, and in fact I'd ended up being a printer. He said that he thought it was still worth my sending down any work that I had to Richard Taylor here at Weta. So I did, and Richard brought me into the design team. I hadn't read the books for maybe ten years or so – I had read them at school, but as soon as I knew what the project was I read them again.

The great thing about the team here was that, if there wasn't any design work to do, you could do other stuff – Richard would get you fiberglassing, or carving poly, or going out molding trees or picking leaves or something. I've basically had a paid apprenticeship in the last five years – in filmmaking!

Because I was quite happy to be onset as well, just as a set dresser, I spent some time on one of the mountains where they were filming. So if Richard wanted anything designed there, he could grab me; in this way I ended up designing Sauron's sword on top of a mountain, on the back of somebody's call sheet. I remember I was just sitting in the snow, looking down at Richard and Peter Jackson, who had just starting filming, and thinking, "This is cool! This is a good job!"

Warren Mahy
April 2002


GIL-GALAD *Early conceptual design*
The color scheme was drawn from the heraldry and colors of the generic High-elven armor but was intensified to enable the character to stand out in the battle scenes. Warren created the Second Age weaponry for Gil-galad's troops as well as the encasing armor worn by the army in battle.

MORIA ORCS *Conceptual sketch*

DWARVES *Conceptual sketches*
Warren used a series of geometric shapes to suggest the precision and solidity of the Dwarven armor.
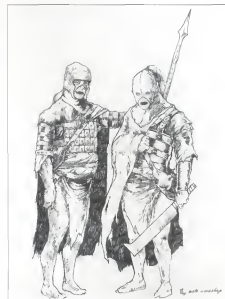
URUK-HAI *Armor sketches*
These are early ideas for Uruk-hai armor, focusing on the covering of their faces.

ORC HELMETS *Conceptual sketches*
"There was a big push to do a whole range of Orc helmets quickly, so I had a chance to spend a week or so just designing helmets. I wanted them to be practical, but the ones with the pointed nasal weren't – mainly because the stunt guys could barely see." WM

URUK-HAI ARMY
Conceptual sketch
"This is one of the final
Uruk-hai drawings I did.
I love the concept of the
helmet covering the eyes
of the Uruk – it's a very
scary look." *WM*

CIRITH UNGOL URUK-HAI
Conceptual design
"Same old Uruk-hai, different
armor. Because we'd already gone
through the traveling Uruk-hai, and
we'd gone through the Helm's Deep
Uruk-hai, we had to find something else
that worked for them. I really like the idea that
these guys were more Orc-like in their armor
preferences, with potentially more leather
on top of chain, and lots of red, lots of
Eyes. These guys are Sauron's – the
earlier Uruk-hai wore the white hand of
Saruman, but these ones have their bodies tat-
tooed with Sauron's Eye." *WM*

MORDOR ORC SERGEANT
Conceptual sketch
"This guy was designed as a *Return of
the King* character to be in the scene
where Sam and Frodo are dressed as Orcs
and unwittingly end up in a marching
company of Mordor soldiers. I wanted
him to be a typical brutish-looking Orc
who would have no problem using his
whip for discussing problems. He ended
up being my favorite Orc character in the
film trilogy." *WM*

URUK-HAI BIRTHING
Conceptual design
This shows an Uruk-hai emerging from
its sac. *WM*

THE WATCHER *Conceptual sketch*
This sketch emphasizes the mouth and tentacles to create a
nightmarish vision.

THE WATCHER *Conceptual sketch*
This shows the possible scale of the Watcher against two of the
Fellowship underneath.

GOLLUM *Conceptual sketch*
"Just a very quick Gollum to show
a facial expression – not especially
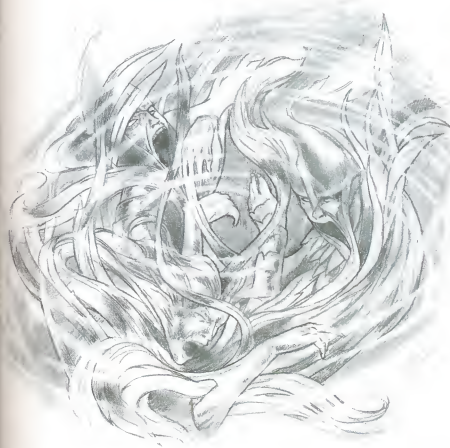relevant, but still fun to draw!" *WM*

ENTS
Conceptual sketch
"I think I was drawing
sketches of the Warg
at the time, so I didn't
have a lot to do with
the Ents, mainly
because Dan Falconer
had got it so right
from the beginning.
This one is a very
slim-looking Ent." *WM*

SPECTRAL CORPSES
Conceptual sketch
"Frodo is way down in the reeds, and
he's trying to fight his way out, but he's
been surrounded by these shapes. I can
imagine that the eddies in the water
would change the shapes quite often.
Potentially at one moment it could be a
Gondorian spectral image in front of him,
and then it's an Orc, and so on. Actually,
that's not true, because Peter Jackson had
talked a lot about the fact that he didn't
want Orcs in there – he didn't want to
confuse people into thinking that the
Orcs were chasing him under the water.
So we just concentrated on Elven and
Gondorian-type characters." *WM*

SPECTRAL CORPSES
Conceptual sketches
"Two sketches that give an idea of the
corpses' facial expressions and what it
would be like seeing the faces close up.
The one below is viewed looking down
into the water from the top. Both show
how the light would be reflected in the
eyes, and the distance to the surface of
the water." *WM*

WARG RIDERS *Conceptual sketch*
"This was a later version of Sharkû.
There was an illustration that Johnny
Brough did that had quite a high back
to the leather armor, and Pete quite
liked it, so we started adding that in.
This is pretty much the starting
point for the final costume design.
You can see that he's carrying a
piece of meat for his Warg.
Nice." WM

WARGS *Conceptual sketches*
"At the beginning Peter Jackson used a few words
that were helpful to us – it was a guide to what he
was looking for; he liked the idea of the Wargs
being almost reptilian but prehistoric as well. These
are definitely more doglike, a mastiff, but strange –
with bad anatomy! Then it started drifting more
toward a prehistoric doglike creature, only with
weird bends and stretches." WM

WARGS *Conceptual sketch*
"Moving away from dogs, this one has an
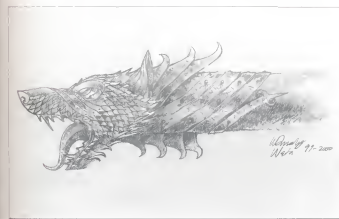almost horselike stature." WM

ÉOMER *Conceptual design*

"For Éomer I wanted a royal type of armor – something that was a little more fitting for a prince from the top family. This was unusual for me – I'd never been a drawing-in-color person. I only started doing them when I came to Weta, but I watched Dan Falconer with his marker pens. It was good training, because you could start playing with color quickly by photocopying your drawing, playing around with it. 'Ooh, I've done something terrible!' so you just throw it away and then color up another photocopy." *WM*

ÉOWYN'S ARMOR *Conceptual design*

"If she was going to be mistaken for a man, Éowyn's armor had to be quite utilitarian. You could imagine the armor she's wearing on just a foot soldier, but hers had to be reasonably form-fitting and accentuate the female form, within reason. It has chain mail and then a splint at the top of it, just for added protection down the arms and down the skirt, and a very basic Rohan shield." *WM*

GROND *Conceptual sketch*

"This is a very early pass at Grond's wolf head, which is an idea from the book. Tolken actually described it pretty thoroughly. I think of it as a distant cousin to the Wargs. It was such a strange shape, though, and the end of its nose would work but the rest would be a bit fragile. At this stage, the concept was solely a wolf's head on the end of a battering ram." *WM*

EASTERLING *Conceptual design*

"The great thing about the Easterlings, because they were on the bad side in an alliance with Sauron, was that you could make them more tribal; they could be a bit more raw and a bit more savage. I loved the idea of having exposed skin, a bare chest: he's almost tempting you, 'Come on! I'm armored to a point but, you know, my heart is open! Just try it!'" *WM*

HARADRIM *Conceptual design*

"The brief for the Haradrim was tribal. This guy has a Pacific Island sort of feel. I imagined him being a mûmak driver, with a long spiked driving lance that he uses to steer, pulling the ears or cheek to make the mûmak turn. Everyone was keen on the red body dye as well – paint or blood mixed with earth – to try to get some color into the design.

"One idea that was talked about for the battle scenes was that the Haradrim's victims would be hanging off the mûmakil. See those skulls on spikes? Each head that the driver cut off, he would shove onto a spike. I think the idea got dropped quickly, but I liked it." *WM*
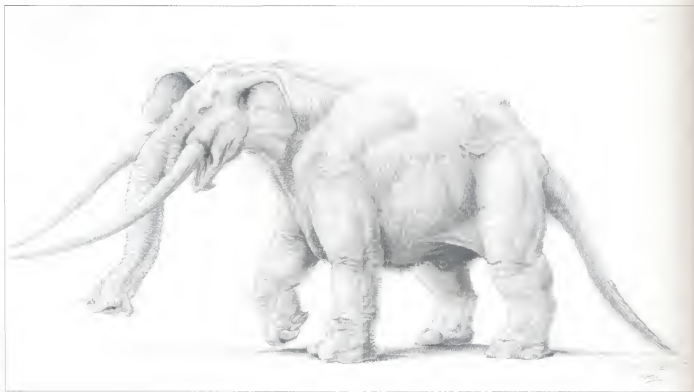
SAURON *Conceptual sketches*

Warren was charged with designing the overall Sauron concepts, such as the helmet, weapons, and armor. Although such a sequence isn't in the story itself, these illustrations showing Sauron throttling an Orc minion and burning Gil-galad were done not only to give an idea of the height of Sauron in his armor, but also to demonstrate the cruel majesty of the character.
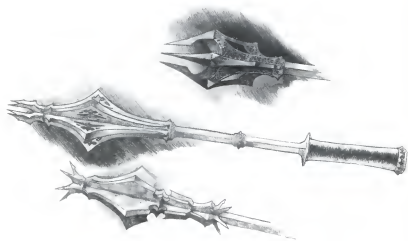
**MOUTH OF SAURON** *Conceptual sketches*

"The idea was that the Mouth of Sauron was purely that, just the mouth. He couldn't see – well, maybe he could with his mind – but the body was just a tool. There was an idea at one stage, I think it could be this one above left, that parts of his helmet actually had hooks into his mouth that kept his mouth open as well, or pulled his mouth back into a grimace. But it didn't work out that way because Bruce Spence, the actor who plays the Mouth, couldn't talk; he couldn't get his mouth to move. Peter Jackson liked the idea that the robe flowed up onto the helmet, providing the horn shapes out at the sides. I like the way it gives him an almost religious, priestlike look." WM

MÛMAKIL *Conceptual sketches*
"I was going for something different with the mumakil, not just giving Peter Jackson a straightforward elephant; you've still got a trunk and tusks, so it still looks like an elephant, but I was trying to alter the proportions to give it that sense of size. I had in mind some of the dinosaurs, with large legs and clawed feet. I quite liked the idea of having the head out on a big thick neck, again giving it that dinosaur look. Since this was at the early stage, whenever we put something on a creature, we hoped it would inspire the scriptwriters to use the creature in a new way. I think we were going for the idea that they were controlled by the Haradrim pulling on the ears, so I gave them substantial ones that could lend some weight to that idea." *SB*

SHELOB *Conceptual sketch*
"I'm not particularly arachnophobic, and people who are all seem to have a different reason for being so – some find the number of legs scary, others the way spiders walk. I confess that one thing I always find creepy in spiders is the multiple eyes. So trying to make a scary spider monster when you're not scared by them was a bit tricky. At this stage, we were trying to keep it more along the lines of a proper spider, rather than Tolkien's description, which is different. His version has horns and jaws and all sorts of things." *SB*
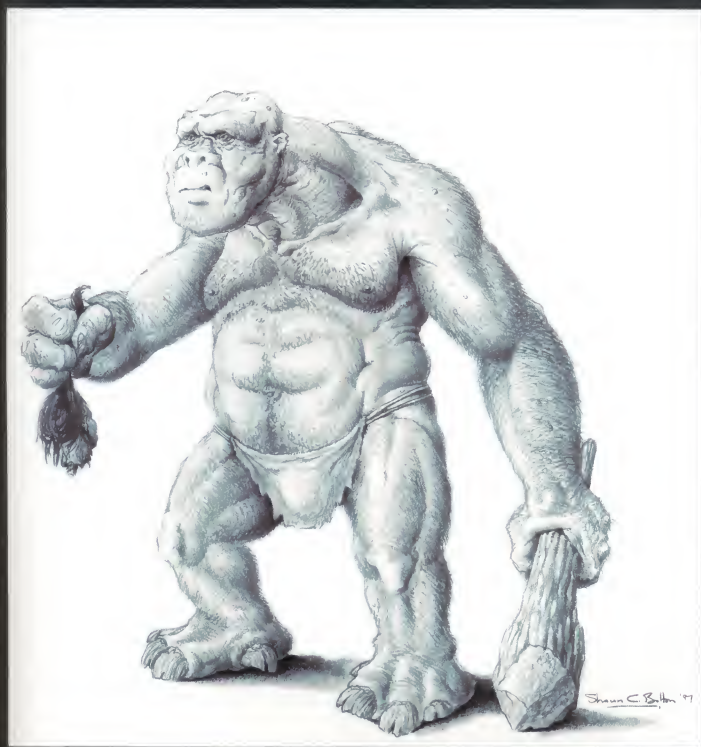
TROLL *Conceptual sketch*
"This was a very early drawing for the cave-troll, possibly my first or second, and was really just a jumping-off point for the design process. Although the design went in a different direction as the look of Middle-earth evolved, the final cave-troll was surprisingly similar in proportions to my 'Neanderthal gorilla' concept." *SB*

THE BALROG *Conceptual sketch*
Shaun depicted this early concept for the
Balrog wreathed in flame and roaring.

FELL BEAST *Conceptual sketch*
"I come from a stop-motion background, so I've a big interest in dinosaurs, and
you can see that here in this guy. I was trying for something that wasn't a dragon,
but not a bird either. I don't think any of us really explored the idea of a feathered
fell beast. We were trying for something emaciated, because these creatures aren't
well treated. This particular version about how it would look when it's on the ground,
how it might walk around, with the bridle, of course, for the rider." *SB*

MAQUETTES

EASTERLING *Maquette*

"I was so pleased to sculpt this. Daniel took the lead on the Easterling designs, but I was lucky enough to realize this design in 3D. It's a great-looking design. I put my own slight spin on it, which is the fan of arrows on his back. They didn't have bows in the end, which is really sad. But other than that, I was just lucky to sculpt a great piece of work from someone else's drawing – that's the whole Weta teamwork thing in action, the culmination of many people's work. It's so cool that almost every drawing or design was produced by the team of artists and designers, rather than just one person. The whole project has been fun because of that." *BW*

SAURON ARMOR CONCEPT *Maquette*

This is the third and final maquette of Sauron. Peter Jackson responded well to elements from all three of Warren's sculpts – in this one he liked the robes that draped over the armor. *WM*

ELVEN ARMOR CONCEPT *Maquette*

Originally designed as an idea for the Elven armor appearing in *The Two Towers*, but ultimately rejected, this maquette was later selected as a strong lead for the armor worn by the Elves in the Second Age, seen in the prologue to *The Fellowship of the Ring*. *WM*

CAVE-TROLL *Maquette*

Jamie's sculpt for the cave-troll, which was then painted by Ben Wootten, was the final approved maquette. *JB & BW*

CAVE-TROLL *Maquette*

Ben had already produced a sculpt of the cave-troll's facial design. The above maquette was a refinement of that and was liked by Peter. *BW*
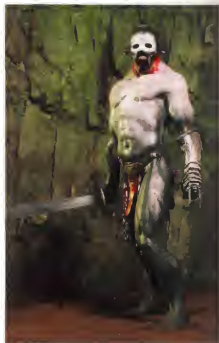

ORC *Maquette*

An early facial sculpt that incorporates a helmet and chain mail made by Weta's armory. *WETA*

ORC *Maquettes*

These early sculpts by Jamie explored what kind of armor the Orcs might wear. *JB*

BILBO TRANSFORMATION *Maquette*
This design was produced for the scene
at Rivendell where Bilbo's face is seen to
briefly transform into a hideous, Gollum-
like creature, a kind of "what-if" scenario
in which we see what Bilbo might have
become had he succumbed to the evil
lure of the Ring. *WETA*

ORC *Maquette*
This sculpture was
from very early on
in the production,
before the design
of any part of the
Orc had been
finalized. *JB*

URUK-HAI *Maquette*
JB

NAZGÛL HORSE
Maquette
JB

THE BALROG *Maquettes*
Ben's maquette goes through the process
from colorless sculpt to the painted and
lit creature (main image). Warren's take
on the Balrog, bottom right, has a
slightly different color scheme.
BW & WM
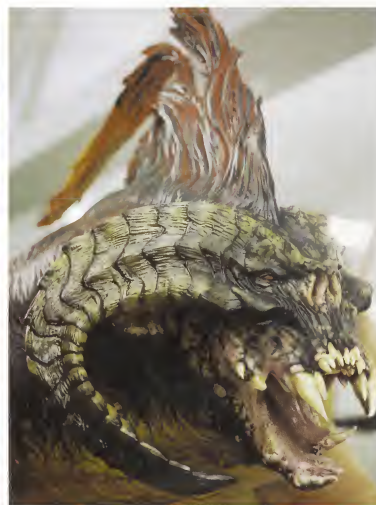
FELL BEAST
Maquette
BW

FELL BEAST *Maquette*
"This fell beast was based on my drawings, keeping a dinosaur look. By this stage, I was envisaging it more as a pterodactyl, in terms of its proportions at least. I like working in three dimensions; it's actually a good way to do design, as you can sometimes do a sculpture quicker than you can a drawing. However, drawing in pencil can be equally satisfying, and it's probably quicker to do a lot of detail in pencil as opposed to sculpting a maquette!" *SB*

ROHIRRIM *Maquette*
"There was a strong Celtic influence in the Rohirrim designs. We opted for fin-mail – scale mail that tapered to a point – as a point of difference from the chain of the Uruk-hai and Gondorians, and a color scheme dominated by green and gold." *DF*

ROHIRRIM *Maquette*
"The soldier in this maquette has a maroon cloak featuring embroidery on the back. I imagined that his cloak had been passed down through generations from his soldier ancestors." *SL*

WARGS *Maquettes*
These were created to show the CGI designers how the Wargs looked in terms of size and weight. WM

ENTS *Maquettes*
"We experimented with different Ent body proportions, trying to break out of the human form by extending or shrinking their arms and legs. We also explored the balance between how much man and how much tree would make up their final forms. Some were more manlike, but Treebeard (far left) was closer to a tree. Peter Jackson approved this foot-and-a-half maquette and it became the bible reference for Treebeard." *DF*
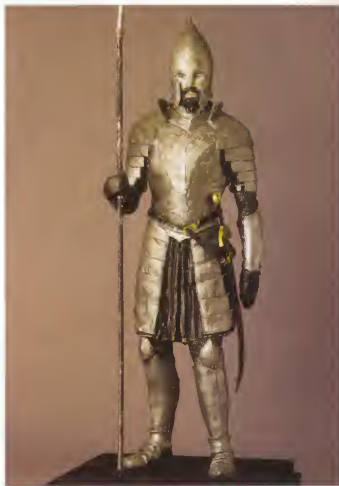
FOUNTAIN GUARD *Maquette*

"This Fountain Guard sculpt is pretty close to the final look. Once Peter Jackson has seen a couple of rounds of drawings, and he's fairly comfortable that the direction we're going in is what he wants, 3D then becomes a requirement – it can be rotated and viewed from all angles. This is so he can confirm it is the look he is after. So the maquette is a realization and a fine-tuning of what he saw in our drawings that he really liked. With the Fountain Guard, we pretty much got the say on how the costumes looked because, on the Fountain Guard and even more on the Gondorian troops, they were far more of a component of the armor. However, there are reversals to that, where costume has more input. Aragorn's Black Gate outfit was more Ngila Dickson's department than ours, so there were concessions made to fit with her designs. As a result, we're unlikely to do a maquette of Aragorn – we tend to do only our own designs when it is something that can't quite be visualized in a drawing. Maquette clothing doesn't give you an accurate representation of texture. A drawing can actually do a better job of clothing than a quick sculpt, whereas a quick sculpt of armor, which is a solid object, is really useful. Also, maquettes were used if there was going to be a digital realization as well. We sculpt special maquettes for digital scanning after the final design has been agreed on, a sculpt that is at least four feet tall. Those are big models!" *BW*

GONDORIAN SOLDIERS *Maquettes*
These three maquettes are some of the many that were produced by Weta as the design of the Gondorian armor progressed toward final approval by Peter Jackson. The one above left is by Ben and shows a Middle Eastern influence, particularly in the long chain skirt. Above right is one of Warren's early sculpts, exploring ideas for armor design. The sculpt to the right was the final Gondorian maquette that Daniel did, and represents the culmination of many people's work. *BW, WM, & DF*
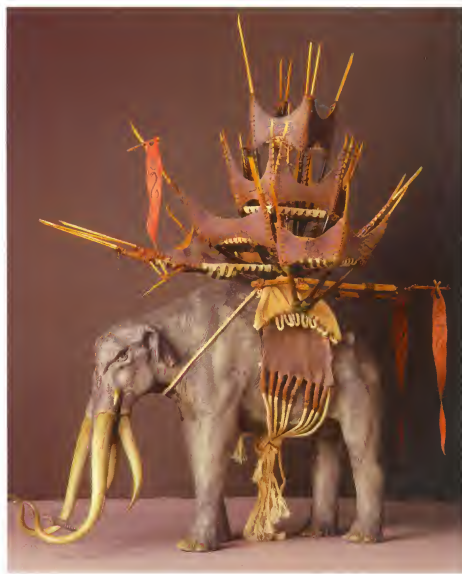

CITADEL GUARD *Maquette*
This highly detailed design maquette by Daniel is the final approved design, and was produced for Weta Digital as a scanning model from which to create digital versions of the Citadel Guard figures. *DF*

FELL BEAST CLAW *Maquette*
This sculpt of the fell beast's claw by Mike Asquith was done at a large scale for scanning so that the Weta Digital artists could get the textures and colors right for the digital model. Gino Acevedo painted it while demonstrating a technique with plaster of Paris; a cast of the sculpt done in plaster of Paris can be worked up to produce the very hard, crisp feeling that you would get in the actual claw itself. *MA*

MÛMAKIL *Maquette*
"This maquette was made from a design of Daniel Falconer's that Peter Jackson liked. I just turned it into a three-dimensional creature with a few changes. Because I have a stop-motion background, a lot of my 2D creature designs don't change much as I progress to 3D. At the back of my mind, no matter what I'm drawing, I'm thinking in 3D. It often works out that I pencil it, then sculpt it, but someone else will color it because by that stage I've moved on to something else. I didn't do the tower on the back of this maquette. In fact, that's one of the reasons we had the maquettes in the first place – so that they could try building different structures on its back. I believe this was built by Matt Appleton, but from a design by Johnny Brough." *SB*

SHELOB *Maquettes*
"In some ways I prefer the sculpt above because it hasn't been painted. With a flat tone, it's easier to study. To the right is the most successful of the three body maquettes that were done – it's about 18 inches in diameter. Some things work well here, such as the immense weight of her abdomen – it's very baggy and wrinkly and we can see that it's actually resting on the back leg, it's so fat. Peter really liked the build of the tunnel web spiders, which have reasonably long but chunky, very strong-looking legs, so we can see that proportion here." *BW*

SHELOB *Maquettes*
With so many of the Weta designers working on Shelob, a number of different designs were created, all trying, and in some ways succeeding, to capture the essence of what Peter Jackson envisioned as the ultimate scary spider. The one near right is by Greg Tozer, while the others are by Jamie Beswarick. *GT & JB*

SHELOB *Maquettes*
"After the initial sculpt (top right) had been approved and scanned, Weta Digital quickly realized they would need to have a much more detailed understanding of Shelob's mouthparts in order to create a working digital model. Due to the deadline imposed on the digital animation team, only a day could be spent designing the mouth workings. The quickest way to achieve this was through an augmented version of the original sculpt. We poured a hard Plasticine copy from the existing mold and quickly worked the mouth details into it. The design brief was to the point: scary and disgusting. From memory, I conjured up a combination of the most vile images I could think of and worked them around the existing mandibles: squid beaks, crayfish mouths, and various 'organic apertures' were the main inspiration. The only change Peter made to this design was to remove the large middle tooth at the top of the mouth. The digital team did an amazing job of breathing life into the design (above right). From a static sculpt to a slobbering snapping maw.

"Above is the approved Shelob face sculpt. Designing the paint scheme on an organic-translucent base, Gino Acevedo used this silicone rubber casting of the maquette. Combining elements from Jamie's anatomical spider-face sculpts and Greg's diseased maquettes, opposite, this final version was an attempt to capture all the aspects of design that Peter and Fran warmed to the most. The diseased growths were whittled back to a concentration around the left eye, and a more predatory look was introduced by bringing the alpha eyes closer together. In keeping with the squat nature of the tunnel web spider, Peter had me shorten the length of the face, bringing the eyes and mouthparts closer and creating a more focused creature. Only the size of a fist, this design maquette was to become the scanning model, as the scan technology no longer required large-scale models to achieve high resolution. The resulting scan was so detailed that it perfectly captured an errant thumbprint on the back of the model!" *BH*

KING OF THE DEAD *Maquette and Photoshop exercise*
"The first stage of the King of the Dead transformation consisted of a full head and facial prosthetic appliance sculpted by Jamie Beswarick (above right). The artwork shown here for the second stage would have to be done digitally to achieve the effect. To achieve this we made a clay copy of the full prosthetic makeup, then sculptor Bill Hunt carved into the appliances until he had sculpted a decomposing skull that would line up perfectly with the makeup, making it possible for Weta Digital composite artist Charlie Tait to complete the ghostly effect of having the skull show through the makeup at times.

"The second stage of the King of the Dead CGI was for the scene in which you see the King during his transformation. Of course, there's also a prosthetic mask on the actor – there's a haze or mist that flows over his face, and as the mist covers him you start to see the deterioration, and begin to see the skull beneath his skin and all the gory detail." *GA*

GOLLUM *Silicone head*
The final head design (right) – designed and sculpted by Jamie Beswarick and painted by Gino Acevedo: "After designing several different paint schemes for Gollum, this is the final 'look' that Peter approved." *JB & GA*
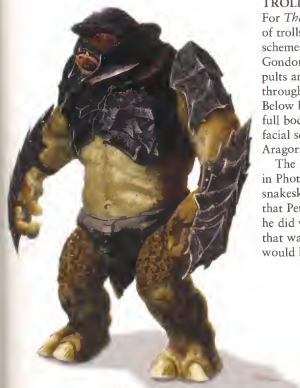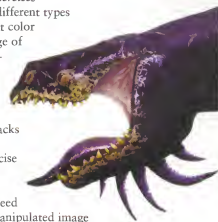

TROLLS AND FELL BEASTS *Photoshop exercises*
For *The Return of the King*, there were five different types of trolls, all of which required subtly different color schemes. The helmeted ones were for the Siege of Gondor, with the one below loading the catapults and the one above right used to crash through the gate, attacking all in its path. Below left can be seen the Attack Troll in full body armor. The troll above left, with facial scars and sideburns, is the one that attacks Aragorn during the battle at the Black Gates.

The fell beast image to the right is an exercise in Photoshop, trying to replicate the look of snakeskin and come up with a color scheme that Peter Jackson would approve, which indeed he did with this one. Below it is a digitally manipulated image that was done to show what the inside of a fell beast's neck would look like when the head was removed from the body. *GA*

DIGITAL PAINTINGS

"Digital painting is a wonderful combination of the oldest artistic technique in the world with the most modern artistic technique. You can manipulate every pixel of a digital picture now to create color and light and shade and so manipulate the data that was shot on the day. But to do that, you go back to the oldest art form, just a brush and pigments and paint to create the look."

PETER JACKSON

A digital matte artist is a painter first, digital artist second, and quite often that is the approach one had to take when producing matte shots for the films. The world of *The Lord of the Rings* that is being incorporated into the film is based on original art by illustrators such as Alan Lee, so it springs from a very subjective frame of mind. Regardless of the wonderful vistas that New Zealand provides, and that the photo reference sometimes offered, sometimes thrust, into the development of the image, the matte painting is a painting in a very real sense: it has to convey a story. This begins with a sketch by Alan Lee or a quick paint sketch by Jeremy Bennett. Sometimes Gus Hunter will give us a bit more in terms of a Photoshop layout. Once we get the green light (quite often Peter Jackson approves the "feel" of a shot more than anything else) we begin painting, first roughly, to lay the image out accurately and match it to the live plate, then more definitely. Since changing a painting in its later history is not as simple as changing lighting on a shader and rerendering, great care is often taken in making sure that each step is successful. Sometimes we'll even film a rougher painting to see how much more is actually needed. For others we might overpaint – in other words, put in more than will ever be seen, just in case.

Of course, there are paintings that were fairly simple sky replacements, where the matte painter acted like a digital compositor, in a sense using digital tools to replace one image with another without working too hard, but those instances were quite rare. Photos rarely do the trick in and of themselves. The difference between a digital compositor and a matte artist is that they usually have many other concerns (in the case of *The Lord of the Rings*, quite weighty, technical ones) and a variety of tasks to tackle. Our two worlds have a gray area between them, but there is quite a distinction in terms of focus: a simple way to put it would be that one is a photographer on wheels, and the other is a painter, but both can be animators.

Roger Kupelian
May 2003

FROM BREE TO RIVENDELL *Weathertop*
"Working from some of Alan Lee and Jeremy Bennett's concept sketches, based upon the actual location footage, this dramatic view was created by adding various background layers and sky elements on the computer." *GH*

RIVENDELL *The Ford of Bruinen*
"The digital composite to the left was the first illustration of how this spectacular scene would look in the film. It shows the water-based horses – summoned by the power of the Elves – in relation to their environment and to the Ringwraiths and their horses prior to the deluge that washes them away. Arwen on Asfaloth can be seen to the right." *GH*

MORIA *Khazad-dûm*
"Taking Alan Lee's conceptual drawings as a starting point, this painting was created using the miniature stairs built by Weta Workshop. This composite was created to show how much flame and lava are visible in the cavern and to give a feeling of depth, although it was important to hint at the bottomlessness of the chasm. The columns of the stairway actually go down farther than the original frame of the miniature, and the base doesn't show lava so much as flame, rocks, and smoke to imply that it's there somewhere, far beneath the bridge." *GH*

RIVENDELL *The One Ring*
"This is a study of how we see the fire flow within the Ring. This was used for reference only." *GH*

LOTHLÓRIEN *Caras Galadhon*
"The lower half of the shot was filmed against a blue screen, so the upper part of the shot still had to be designed for the pan-up. The artwork had to include the miniature trees and show the look, mood, and atmosphere." *GH*

LOTHLÓRIEN *Galadriel's Glade*
"These are all Galadriel glow studies. Different versions of Galadriel's good, semi-evil, and evil glows were done to show Peter." *GH*

AMON HEN *Color studies*
"These are the first and last frames of the sequence in which Frodo sees into Wraith World after putting on the Ring. The point of these two designs was to illustrate how the tunnel-vision effect would look on screen to display the sights that emerge. The effect uses tongues of flickering flame, acting like fingers, flowing outward." *GH*

OSGILIATH *Conceptual design*
"Using a shot from the location footage, below, this is a conceptual design of the view of Osgiliath down below and Minas Tirith in the distance, upon which Roger Kupelian based his final matte painting." *GH*

HELM'S DEEP *Color studies*
"Here are two studies I did that show the before-and-after moment when a flash of lightning finally reveals the huge Uruk-hai that is marching up to Helm's Deep." *GH*

THE DEAD MARSHES *Spectral Corpses*
"These panels show the development from an early painting study of the corpses to combining all the filmed elements together to show what the final look could be." *GH*

RIVENDELL *Matte painting layouts*
"This layout is for the background behind Arwen and Aragorn during a romantic scene at dusk. Yanick Dusseault based his final matte painting (page 215) on this." *GH*

RIVENDELL *Cyclorama study*
"An early matte painting study for when Arwen is talking to Elrond in his chamber. I used subdued blues, greens, and golden colors for the highlights to give it a more melancholic palette." *GH*

MINAS MORGUL *Morgul river concept*
"This is a study showing what the Minas Morgul river environment might look like. It was thought that it would be almost like a swamp, sickly green in color and covered in mist. This shot shows Sam and Frodo watching the huge Orc army march away down the very road they have just traveled up, and off to war." *GH*

PATHS OF THE DEAD *Digital concepts*
"These are concepts showing different ideas of how Narsil might have interacted with the King of the Dead's sword." *GH*
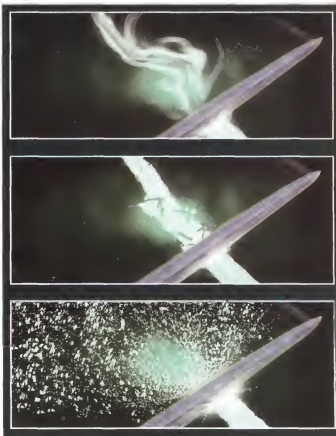
GONDOR *River Anduin*
"This is a layout of the mid- and background mountains, using three or four photographic elements shot by Craig Potton. Afterward, the burning villages were added and then we put the Corsair ships in the foreground to show what the whole scene would look like." *SL*

MINAS MORGUL *Lightning-flash concepts*
"Two of a set of conceptual illustrations demonstrating variations of flames shooting up from the beacon tower of Minas Morgul. The one below has been placed over John Howe's illustration from page 129, which has been extended upward and color-corrected to suit approved colors and lighting." *GH*

SHELOB'S LAIR *Phial glow study*
"This is one of two studies that I did, which were a combination of Jeremy Bennett's painting with my Photoshop effects added to show the look of the glowing phial inside Shelob's tunnel." *GH*

THE PELENNOR FIELDS *Color study*
"This is an early Photoshop concept that shows the mûmakil coming out of the mist and dust toward the Riders of Rohan." *GH*

THE CRACK OF DOOM *Color studies and digital artwork*
"These studies were to show the inside of the Mount Doom environment; they are composites featuring the live-action plate in the foreground and the digital painting behind. I was trying to give Peter some options regarding atmosphere, lava, and color palettes." *GH*

MORDOR *Gorgoroth Plain*
"This establishes the mid and background areas and sky. Jeremy Bennett painted in the Eye of Sauron lighting effects. In the end, we went for a cooler palette to avoid a 'Martian' type of feeling." *SL*

MORDOR *Mount Doom*
"This artwork encompasses the first, middle, and last frames of the shot in which Gollum jumps on Frodo and Sam on Mount Doom. It's pieced together from several skies, rocks from Wellington's south coast, and falling lava bombs." *SL*
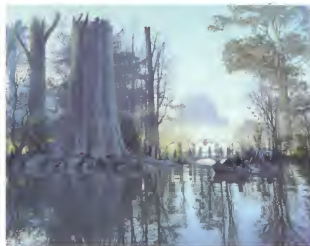

MORDOR *Mount Doom*
"Different skies, atmospheres, lava bombs, flowing lava, and rock elements combine to create this particular look up the slopes of Mount Doom." *SL*

LOTHLÓRIEN *Caras Galadhon at dusk*
"Unfortunately cut from the final theatrical print, this was a romantic view of the Fellowship being led through the mighty mallorn trees just before they meet Galadriel. The shot became a mixture of miniature mallorns, the live set, and the matte painting." *MD*
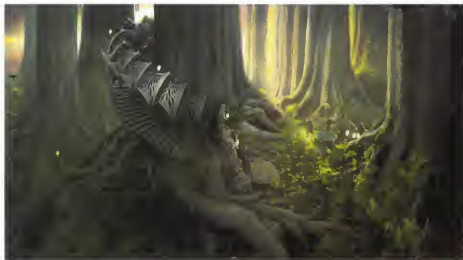
LOTHLÓRIEN
Silverlode River
"This painting was for the scene on the banks of the Silverlode River, when the Fellowship make their farewells to Galadriel and Caras Galadhon. This shot required the addition of trees, a major tree extension (note the reflection of the big tree in the water), and also the last views of Caras Galadhon in the early morning mist in the background." *MD*

MINAS TIRITH *Minas Tirith at dawn*
"This was the first big establishing shot of the mighty city of Minas Tirith. It became known as the Istanbul shot; the city was a large-scale miniature composited onto a full painted background. Computer-generated smoke and a scattering of doves were later added." *MD*

RIVENDELL
Matte painting
"Using Gus Hunter's digital layout (page 209) as a guide, this painting was done in a more monochromatic palette, to convey a slight nostalgic feeling to the romantic sequence between Aragorn and Arwen." *YD*

RIVER ANDUIN *Nen Hithoel*
"This combines the various elements of the location with live footage of the Fellowship heading toward a fateful encounter at Amon Hen." *RK*

THE MISTY MOUNTAINS *Gollum's cave*
"Alan Lee's preparatory work (page 89) made it very easy for me to complete this painting. He had already produced a detailed sketch and digital painting of the scene; from this, the scene was shot with the actor performing on a small piece of the rock set. From this footage I took a live-action plate of Gollum and inserted it 'behind' the painting. It was then simply a matter of extending the set piece into the vast mountain range." *YD*

THE GLITTERING CAVES
Digital matte painting
"This particular one offered quite a challenge, both technically and artistically. The camera movement had to be digitally extended to reveal the painting filling most of the frame. It was also difficult to find good photographic reference material for the subterranean environment – the result was therefore entirely hand-painted." *YD*
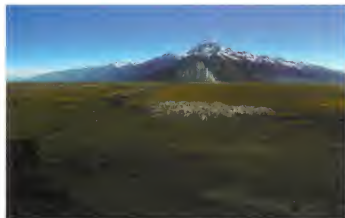
OSGILIATH *Digital matte painting*
"With this scene, I had to match a live plate with a very specific set of expectations: Ithilien and Osgiliath, with the River Anduin cutting through the plain, as well as Minas Tirith in the distance. There are no plains this vast in New Zealand, so this had to be a painting. Even the miniatures provided had to be completely redressed to suit the feel of the shot. Animation was added as well, in the sky, lighting effects, and minute details within the city, which, by themselves, are barely noticeable. This rendered sequence, an animated matte painting, really, was handed over to Jon Bowen, who then masterfully combined it with the live plate. Because of the vast size of the area it was replacing, this was among the most difficult matte shots produced for the film." *RK*

DUNHARROW ENCAMPMENT
Digital matte painting
"This painting is the establishing shot for the Paths of the Dead sequence. It shows the king's camp at Dunharrow and the entrance to the Paths at the top of a precipitous, zigzagging climb. The difficulty in this shot lay in trying to establish both the path and a relatively somber, oppressive mood for what was basically a brightly lit daytime plate." *MD*

MINAS TIRITH AND THE WHITE MOUNTAINS *Digital matte paintings*
"Originally I painted this for a shot that was going to show Frodo and Gollum's view from Minas Morgul. It's a huge painting that could be used for multiple shots, such as the one above right. All I had to do each time was tweak the shots by adding different clouds so that it always looked a bit different." *RB*
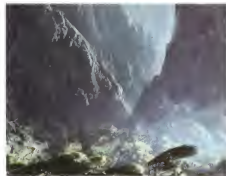
MORGUL VALE
Digital matte painting
"This painting was done for a tilt-down shot that pans down from the Morgul mountains and onto the sleeping Hobbits. Meanwhile, Gollum is having a conversation with himself by a pool." *KdJ*

MINAS TIRITH *Digital matte painting*
"This shot is from a sequence in which Pippin is on his way to light the beacon fire. This view is from just below the beacon on the slopes of Mount Mindolluin. The miniature of the city formed the basis of this painting, but it took some reworking to integrate it into the composition." *DC*
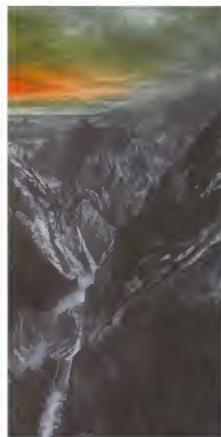
CIRITH UNGOL
Digital matte painting
"This unusually shaped painting, showing the view from the top of the Cirith Ungol tower to the Gorgoroth Plain far below, was designed in this format so that it could follow the tilt-down of the camera, which in turn is following an unfortunate Orc as it falls out of the tower, down to its doom." *RK*
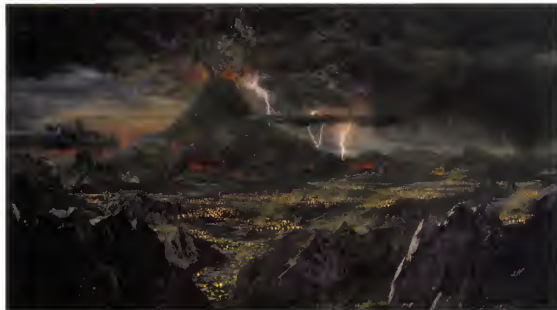
CIRITH UNGOL
Digital matte painting

This painting of the Mordor mountains was combined with the miniature of the entrance to Shelob's Lair and the computer-generated Gollum. All three elements needed to be color-balanced and adjusted to allow for the differing levels of light that would be falling on them. *KdJ*
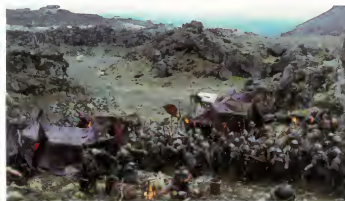
CIRITH UNGOL *Digital matte painting*
"A broad view of the Cirith Ungol range, looking up toward the sky. This was painted to be a master backdrop, usable in a variety of shots; hence the distorted angles. The final shots were much darker, but this has been presented lighter to show the detail of the painting, which represented more than ten kilometers of mountains. A miniature of the Cirith Ungol tower is included for scale. Because this was used for a number of shots at varying angles, it was projected onto varying complexities of geometry." *RK*

CIRITH UNGOL *Digital matte painting*
"This features the miniature of the Cirith Ungol tower in the foreground, and directly behind it the final matte painting. This was a difficult crane shot, and the pieces had to be overpainted to show parallax." *RK*

MORDOR *Digital matte painting*
"This painting reveals the full extent of Mordor's landscape to the two Hobbits as they leave behind the tower of Cirith Ungol and finally enter Sauron's realm. It includes miniatures of Mount Doom and part of the rock set and forms the basis of a wide-pan shot, animated with lightning flashes and the flickering fires of Orc encampments." *RK*

ORC ENCAMPMENT *Digital matte painting*
"Above is an establishing shot of the Orc hordes as they troop off to battle. It was originally a day shot – as shown in the live-action plate above left – but had to be heavily graded to provide the 'Mordor' feel. The painting starts just behind the mid-ground hill and hints at the vastness and ugliness of the Gorgoroth Plain, and in so doing sets the scene for Frodo and Sam as they continue their journey towards Mount Doom." *MD*

MORDOR *Mount Doom*
"I really like this shot and think it looked great for the forty frames that ended up on screen! When I started this shot, Jeremy Bennett showed me his painting of Frodo and Sam's view of Mordor, and Yanick Dusseault's wonderful Mordor paintings from the previous films. I felt that in the past some shots of Mordor had made it look rather beautiful, but this shot was going to be really dark. We needed to get a view of the plume of lava that was convincing and not cartoonish." *RB*

THE PELENNOR FIELDS *Digital matte painting*
"This is a 120-degree view of the Pelennor Fields at dawn and is the vista seen by Théoden as he leads the Rohirrim on their charge into Sauron's Orcs. It was particularly enjoyable to paint the low raking light across the hills and the Mordor range." DC

MORDOR *Gorgoroth Plain*
"This shot went through many revisions, from the rough composite using the live plate, left, through many others, until we eventually arrived at the final painting below. This was a much more simplified view of the Gorgoroth Plain, so that we could establish both the desolation and the distance yet to be covered." DC

MORDOR *Barad-dûr*
"For this shot of Barad-dûr and Mordor beyond, the main challenge was to create a sense of height. This was done predominantly by showing the tops of mountains with clinging clouds under Barad-dûr. It is essentially a black-and-white image with the only color being the lava and, of course, the Great Eye. We wanted a sense of scope and scale without taking away from the Eye. The sky was arranged in such a way that the dark part of the tower could be silhouetted against the bright horizon, while the flaming Eye could play against the darker, heavier clouds." DC
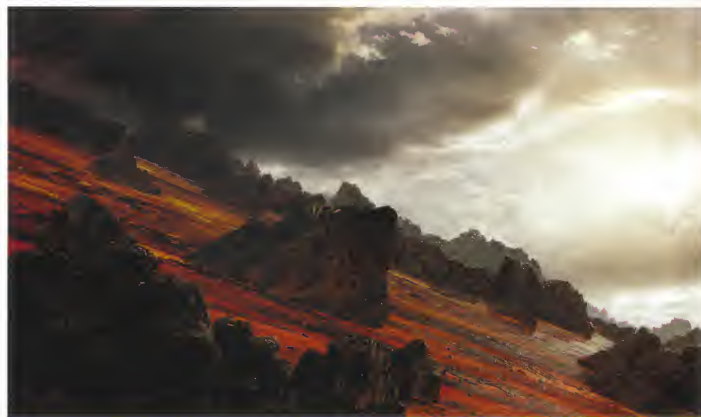

MORDOR *Barad-dûr*
"We really cheated size and scale for the Barad-dûr destruction shots. Peter wanted Mount Doom large in frame behind the tower to link the destruction of the Ring to the destruction of the tower. It was a challenge to keep the feeling of size and distance for these objects, without obscuring them with haze or making them small. We were also careful to not call too much attention to Mount Doom, so as not to take away from the main focus of the shot, the crumbling tower." DC

MOUNT DOOM
Sammath Naur
"This painting is of the view of the top of Mount Doom from the doorway at Sammath Naur. Sam has just followed Frodo into the Crack of Doom. It was a terrific challenge to paint the underside of a pyroclastic cloud." *DC*

RIVENDELL *Twilight matte painting*
"Alan Lee described the mood and did a rough concept to show me what was required for this, a nice twilight view out the windows, using the miniatures of a tower and a couple of buildings that were shot a few months previously." *RB*
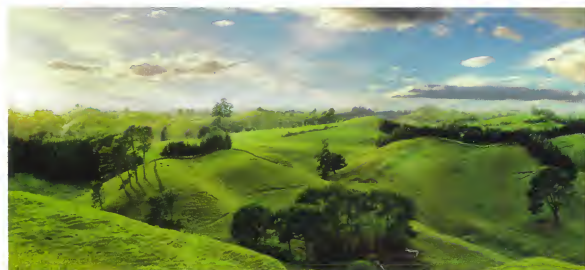
HOBBITON
Digital matte painting
"This takes us back to the green and placid fields of the Shire and Hobbiton. The painting provided a backdrop for a number of shots near the end of the film, when the Hobbits return to the Shire. It is evening time and life remains the same." *MD*

MORDOR *Lava flows*
"For the rescue of Frodo and Sam by Gwaihir, a very dramatic sky was needed, because this is first time that we have seen light break into Mordor. It is a visual relief at the end of a dark journey. In addition to the sky, the rocks and side of the volcano had to be painted. I referenced a lot of rocks found on the coast near Weta, in Wellingon, using their great texture and scale. I was also outside almost daily taking photos of New Zealand skies for inspiration, seeing how the light broke through the cloudy skies." *DC*

THE GREY HAVENS *Sunset matte painting*
"This is one of three sunset paintings that I did. I had only a few hours to paint this, and while it would have been great to have had some hi-res sunset photographs, we didn't have any that looked exactly the way Peter Jackson saw this sequence. Alan Lee then found me a photo he had taken on an earlier reference shoot in the South Island, and this was the result." *RB*

CLOSING CREDITS

Peter and Fran had the idea that they would like to mark the ending of the final film in the trilogy by doing something different with the credits. After we did samples and tests on film, the approach chosen was to represent the actors by their portraits, and the rest of the crew by images selected from the huge numbers of drawings and designs by myself and John Howe.

Fran, assisted by VFX art department coordinator Hannah Bianchini, chose frames from the films that represented moments in which each of the characters look the way we would wish to remember them, and I used these as the basis for pencil renditions. Then Jean-Paul Leonard, of Company Wide Shut, who was responsible for the design work on the DVD menus for all three films, and had taken on the task of designing the end credit sequence, carefully composed the images and text and created the elegiac and beautiful look of our final departure from Middle-earth.
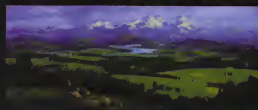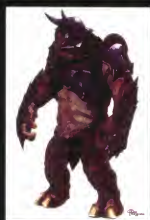
Alan Lee
May 2004
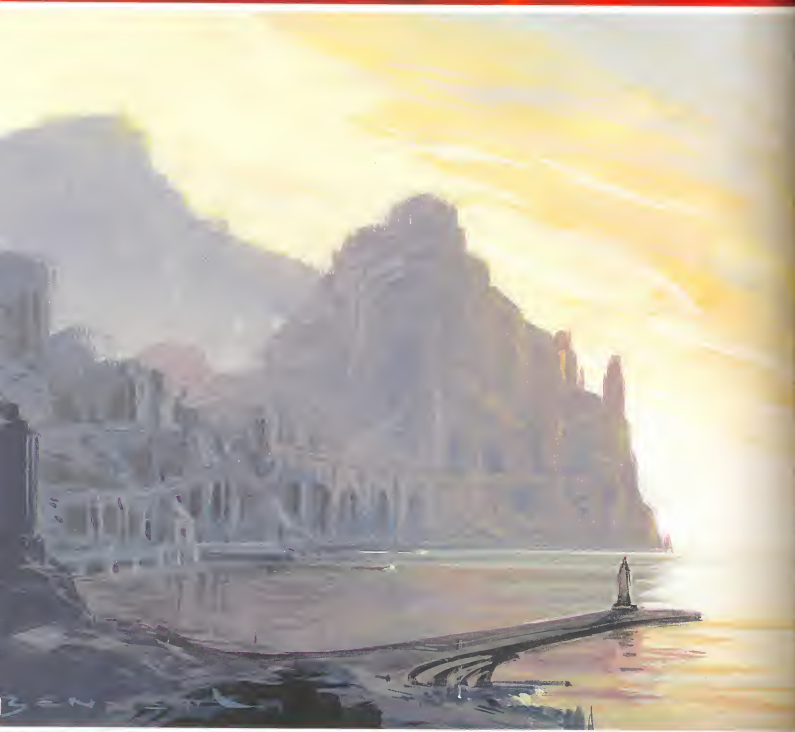
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